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A Medonte pioneer and his famous son.

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Captain Elmes Steele, R.N.

Major-General Sir S. B. Steele

A MEDONTE PIONEER and HIS FAMOUS SON

Published by the Orillia Historical Society

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The Naval and Pioneer Record of Captain Elmes Steele . . .

BY ELMES HENDERSON, M.A.

From Volume 24 of the Papers and Records of the Ontario Historical Society.

From Morgan's "Celebrated Canadians" (1862), under Commander Steele, R.N.

(With additional particulars as to his Naval Services and life in Canada, from information supplied by his son, Major-General Sir Samuel Steele, C.B., M.V.O., and from other sources.)

"It appears that Elmes Yelverton Steele entered the Navy as A.B. in March, 1798, on board the Triton, thirty-two guns, Captain John Gore, under whom, after visiting the Mediterranean, he assisted on the 18th October, 1799, in the capture off Cape Finisterre of the Santa Brigida, a Spanish frigate of thirty-six guns, and three hundred men, laden with treasure to an enormous amount. In the course of 1800 he became midshipman of the Cambridge, 74, flagship of Sir Thomas Pasley at Plymouth, and Atlas, 98, Captain Theophilus Jones, attached to the Channel Fleet . . . . He was nominated Master's Mate of the Caroline, 36, Captain Benjamin William Page; during the passage of that ship to the East Indies he was placed on board a prize and sent home. On his arrival he joined the Castor, 32, Captain Edward Brace, stationed in the Downs. Early in 1805 he was nominated acting Lieutenant of the Amiable, 32, Captain William Bolton; was officially promoted 26th March, in that year; and between August following, and December, 1812, was employed on the coast of North America, off Boulogne, and the north coast of Spain, and in the North Sea and Mediterranean, in the Mercury, 28, Captain Charles Pelley; Leopard, 50, Captain Salisbury Pryce Humphreys; Glommen, Sloop, Captain Charles Pitchford; Arethusa, 38, Captain Robert Mends; Horatio, 38, Captain John Charles Woolcombe; Menelaus, 38, Captain Sir Peter Parker; and Barfleur, 98, Captain Sir Edward Berry. He was on board the Leopard, we believe, when she compelled, on the 22nd of June, 1807, the United States frigate Chesapeake to surrender, after an engagement occasioned by the refusal of the latter to permit the British to search her for deserters. On the 20th March, 1809, a party of seamen under the orders of Lieutenant Steele, who was then serving in the Arethusa, destroyed the guns at Baignio, a place on the coast of France, and captured a vessel there, laden with merino wool; while Lieutenant Fennel, of the Royal Marines, accompanied by Mr. Elliott, the purser, and the boat's crew, ascended the mountains and destroyed the signal posts. He accepted his present

rank 25th April, 1838. He is also a Colonel of the sedentary Militia for the County of Simcoe."

It is necessary to add to the above facts that the "War Services" are not complete, and that the record was taken from a Naval Annual Register which did not pretend to give those services. In particular, the rating as A.B. is misleading. His position actually was equivalent to that of the modern officer-cadet. Also, he attained the rank of Captain, though he accepted the lower rank of Commander after retirement.

With regard to the first action off Cape Finisterre, on the 18th of October, 1799, in which the Santa Brigida, with treasure on board, was captured, there were four British frigates and four Spanish; the latter were laden with one million and a half dollars, each, and their capture was especially ordered by Mr. Pitt, then Prime Minister, as the money was intended as the "sinews of war" in Spain's alliance with France. The British ships were the Triton, Ethalion, Naaid and Allymene; Captain Gore was the Commodore, and his ship was at that time the fastest in the Navy; when the Spanish frigates were sighted she was behind the rest of the Squadron, but owing to her sailing powers the Triton passed her consorts "as if they were at anchor" and closed up rapidly on the enemy. The midshipman of the watch was Elmes Steele, who was in the chains with a night glass as darkness had closed on them when the Triton came on. Captain Gore and the midshipman of the watch were the only ones who were exposed to the Spanish fire which commenced at once, the crew of the Triton having been ordered to lie down and not to fire to retard the ship's progress. The Spaniards led on to a reef of rocks not on the British charts and suddenly changed their course several points; the midshipman of the watch hailed Captain Gore, "They have changed their course points, Sir." Captain Gore ordered a like change and the Triton grazed the outside of the reef. Fire was then opened on the Spaniards. The British frigates had all closed up and the Spanish struck their colours. Captain Gore, after the action, assembled the ship's company on the deck, paraded the midshipman of the watch before them, and addressed them thus, "Mr. Steele, you behaved well last night." The prize money amounted to a large sum, the greatest ever captured by the British navy in one fight. The captains received thirty-six thousand pounds each; lieutenants over ten thousand; midshipmen, seven hundred and fifty; A.Bs. six hundred; and ordinary seamen, or waisters, four hundred and fifty pounds. Captain Gore was made a baronet, with a pension of one thousand a year. The squadron made sail for England at once with their prizes.

On arrival, an unpleasant incident took place. One of the midshipmen of the Triton complained that as the subject of this sketch was not rated yet as a midshipman on the ship's books, he should not get his share of the prize money, but Captain Gore scoffed at the idea and replied, "Steele saved the ship by his watchfulness"—so he got his prize money in spite of the complaint.

Regarding the incident in connection with the Caroline, in which Mr. Steele was Master's Mate, who, by the way, was usually a past midshipman who took alternate watches with the master in navigating the ship, it should be explained that the Caroline had captured a French ship, named La Bonne Mere, and Mr. Elmes Steele was placed in command to take her home with the only assistant, a Mr. Curran, nephew

of the celebrated lawyer and orator of Ireland, John Philpott Curran. Mr. Curran was a midshipman. The crew was composed of the worst of the Caroline, whose Captain, very naturally, would not part with the best when on such a long voyage as that to the East Indies. After the prize had been on her way to England some days, the crew broke into the spirit room in the night, got drunk, were overpowered by the French and Messrs. Steele and Curran placed in arrest below after an ineffectual resistance. Shortly after this occurrence, the French, having lost their reckoning, asked Steele to come up and give it to them, as well as some information about the navigation of the ship, and they would let him walk the deck as a reward. He gave them false reckoning and bearings, and then asked if Curran would be allowed to walk on deck; this was granted and arrangements made to re-capture the ship, Curran going below and telling the British crew to be ready, on the main hatch being thrown up, to spring on deck and re-take the ship. The Scilly Islands were sighted and the British ships in the Channel. The French took the land for Brest. Steele stood in the shrouds with a glass, the French around the bulwarks unarmed. Curran, on being signalled, threw up the main hatch, the British crew sprang on deck, threw themselves on the enemy, most of whom were unarmed, and the British had seized the cutlasses and other arms, stacked in those days around the masts. Steele called out to the crew, "Do not strike or hurt an unarmed man or I will pistol the one who does it—you lost the ship by your rascality!" The French had in the meantime been told "Those are the Scilly Islands; those are British ships in sight, so go below, for resistance is useless." Steele then changed his course to Cork as he had been ordered. The City of Gloucester made him a freeman, and he afterwards used the privilege which entitled him and his heirs to vote there. The last time he voted was in 1830 or about that time.

With reference to the Leopard incident, Elmes Steele was a lieutenant, and the Chesapeake being sighted, the captain ordered him to fire a shot across her bows to make her lie to. Mr. Steele was in command of that broadside and personally had to fire the gun, as the matter was so important, the British Admiral Barclay commanding the North American Station, having been ordered by the Government of Britain (at that time weak in character, Pitt being dead) to insist on the right of search. The gun was fired and the American paid no attention. Mr. Steele reported the fact and Captain Humphrey, commanding, ordered another, saying, "Perhaps they did not see it." Steele reported "Not training angle sufficient"; without changing the course, the Captain ordered a broadside to be fired; the Chesapeake was boarded, and after being searched, was allowed to go. The British Government acted towards their officers in a most unjust manner, punishing the captain, the admiral, and, in fact, all the officers, when the war broke out. The lieutenants were put on half pay and only restored by the influence brought to bear on the Government through the Secretary of State for War.

During his service, Captain Steele navigated his ship up the St. Lawrence late in the season, as far as Quebec, after the buoys had been taken away for the winter. The ship got on a reef and he ordered the crew aft, started the music and the sailors' hornpipes, with the desired result that the ship, owing to the oscillation, slipped off the rock safely, and they proceeded on their way.

Steele was in action off Ushant with the French line-of-battleship Les Droits Des Hommes, which was taken.

The Atlas on which he served was built before the American Revolution, and it was stated that the "World" on the back of the Atlas figure-head would not let the bowsprit into its place without the portion occupied by the United States of America being cut off. This, by the superstitious sailors, was regarded as the cause of the loss of the colonies.

It will be observed that the ships on which Captain Steele served during the war were amongst the most famous of the service, in fact, were constantly employed against the enemy. In 1805, for instance, in a squadron under Sir Richard Strachan, the ships decoyed Villeneuve out of Trafalgar Bay, but did not, owing to the contrary winds, return in time to take part in the great battle. They, however, captured the remnant of the fleet which were escaping, and in 1809, Steele, then a lieutenant, took part in the action in Basque Roads, under Cochrane, and escorted Sir John Moore's army to England after the Battle of Corunna. He also served in Lord St. Vincent's fleet for a time, and had many amusing stories to tell of that distinguished sailor. Captain Steele married when twenty-eight years of age, Elizabeth Seeley Coucher, daughter of Mr. John Coucher, of Bath. They had six children, one of whom—Mr. John Coucher Steele—attained his 92nd year.

Captain and Mrs. Steele went to France after Waterloo and remained there until 1830; several of their children were born there. The family left France owing to revolution, Captain Steele being then in England, as a freeman of Gloucester, at the elections, and Mrs. Steele, much alarmed at the remarkable events occurring around her, left France with her children and joined her husband in England.

In 1832, grants of land were offered in Upper Canada to British officers, soldiers and sailors, so that a strong support and backing should be given to the settlers already there, and Capt. Steele, with his son John, proceeded to Canada by the ship Blanches. She was caught in the ice, threatened destruction by an iceberg; the master lost his head; Captain Steele took command, saved the ship, and was presented with an address by the grateful passengers. He then, accompanied by John, went up the St. Lawrence, part of the way walking on the banks, the batteaux being towed by oxen; they took the coach from Cornwall to Prescott and there embarked for York (Toronto) on the only steamer plying on the great lakes, landed at York, and after necessary arrangements were made, were going to settle in Adelaide, Middlesex County, but at Hamilton met a gentleman named Durand, who persuaded the Captain to go to Medonte, which he did. He was joined next year by Mrs. Steele and the rest of the family, who came via New York and the Erie Canal to Rochester, where they took the only railroad then in America to Charlotte, embarked there for York, and were met by Captain Steele. He escorted them to Medonte, crossing Lake Simcoe on a sailing sloop to the Narrows, as Orillia was then named, which was only an Indian village at the time.

After this, Captain Steele took a great interest in the affairs of the country and as a magistrate assisted to administer the district, aided by a number of naval and military officers. A lot of his enterprises, such as

recommending the Trent Valley Canal in 1839, the restoration of their pensions to the Army and Navy veterans who had commuted them to make a start in Canada, the construction of the road to Orillia from Toronto via the east shore of Lake Simcoe, the Narrows traffic bridge and many other public works, were due to his energy, supported by the veteran officers who settled in the country.

In the early forties, responsible government was granted to Canada, and the people prepared to take advantage of it. Reform was considered necessary and gentlemen who had held opposite opinions on British politics united as Reformers under Mr. Robert Baldwin, and these in the Simcoe District, which was much larger than it is now, selected Mr. James Dallas, of Orillia, a Scotch gentleman of ability, to represent them in Parliament, and his supporters and personal friends proceeded to canvass the constituency. Captain Steele accompanied Mr. Dallas in person to Newmarket, then in the riding, where they obtained a hall, and put up for the night at the house of Capt. Steele's son-in-law, Mr. James Henderson. When the time came for the nomination meeting, Mr. Dallas proceeded to the hall; Captain Steele went later and met Mr. Dallas, who was in a high state of excitement, and showed signs of having been roughly handled. He stated that Mr. Wm. B. Robinson, the Government candidate, with a large number of supporters, had taken possession of the hall, handled him roughly and had driven him forth; he said that he was treated shamefully and would not run for member. Captain Steele tried to persuade him to return to the scene of the trouble, but he point blank refused to do so, so Captain Steele proceeded there, elbowed his way through to the platform. Mr. Robinson was in possession and speaking. Captain Steele protested, insisted on Mr. Robinson giving place, addressed the meeting, stating that Mr. Dallas had refused to continue the contest after being treated so shamefully, and as there was no time to call a meeting to select another, he announced himself as the Reform candidate, and carried the meeting. He got an enthusiastic support and was returned to Parliament. One of the many strange incidents of the election was the arrival over the ice from Thorah, at the polling place in Barrie, of a large number of Highland Scotch settlers, many of them old soldiers, with Major Cameron, a retired officer of the 19th Cameron Highlanders, and his brother, Mr. Cameron, late a lieutenant in that regiment. Each sleigh had in front an axe with a rock elm handle, signifying Elmes Steele. The election being over and Captain Steele elected, he was driven at once to Toronto by Mr. J. A. Irving, an ex-officer of the 13 Light Dragoons, who had served at the Battle of Waterloo and settled near Newmarket. Mr. Irving was afterwards the first warden for the District of Simcoe and later on an M.L.C.

The object for which Captain Steele was elected having been attained, he resigned his seat and afterwards resided on his estate at Medonte, exercising his office as J.P., and doing his best to promote the welfare of the people. Mrs. Steele died in the forties and in 1847 Captain Steele married Anne, the second daughter of Neil MacIan Macdonald, a grandson of Captain Godfrey MacNeil, Chief of the MacNeils of Barra, and nephew of Colonel Donald MacNeil, who commanded a Highland regiment during the Napoleonic wars. There were six children by this marriage. Captain Steele died on the 6th of August, 1865, aged 84 years.

The Steele Family

BY MRS. M. E. WILSON, ORILLIA

Paper Read before the Ontario Historical Society at the annual meeting in Orillia in 1940.

Among the many pioneer families whose names are written in the annals of Ontario's early days is the Steele family. Its history of loyal service and wise leadership dates back to 1708 in Coleford, England, and comes down to the present day, not only in the Old Land, but in Canada, South Africa, and other parts of the British Empire.

Samuel Steele, founder of the Canadian branch of the family, lived (1708-1779) in Coleford. He had two sons—Elmes, a surgeon, and Samuel, a British army officer, who was later at the capture of Quebec. Elmes married Mary Benfield, a kinswoman of the Countess of Berkeley, and had ten children. Six were sons with commissions either as surgeons or combatants in the British services, three being in the Navy and three in the Army. One was drowned in the wreck of an entire squadron of the Navy in the Baltic; and one is believed to have been aboard the "Victory" as an assistant-surgeon at Trafalgar. The three soldiers served throughout the Peninsular War and one of them died of wounds and exhaustion sustained at Waterloo. Another was said to have been the tallest man in the British Army of Occupation in Paris after Napoleon's final overthrow.

This story is particularly concerned with Elmes Yelverton—Captain Elmes Steele, R.N.—perhaps the best-known of the six.

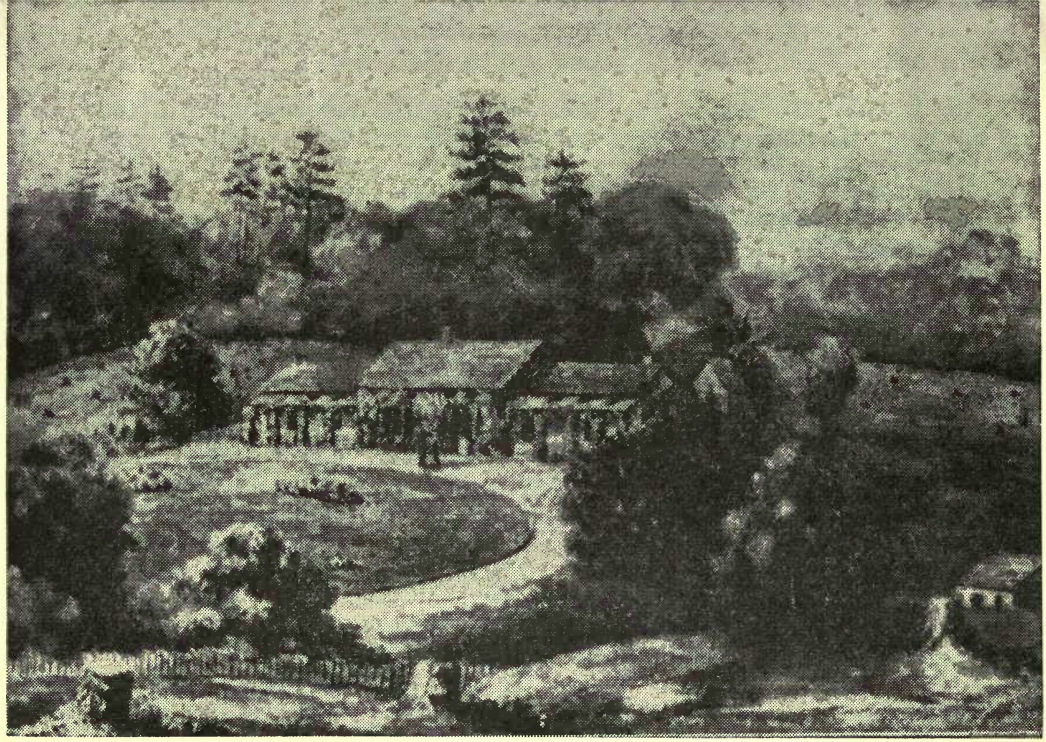
Particulars of the life and service of Captain Elmes Steele as an officer in the Royal Navy have already been dealt with in the Society's publication. My purpose is to tell in a simple way of his life as a pioneer of Simcoe County, stressing those qualities by which he will be always remembered in that locality.

In 1832 he migrated to Canada, at the age of 51, after thirty-seven years of continuous and effective service to his king and country. With him came his second son, John Coucher, then fifteen. The voyage of 2½ months in a sailing vessel, The Branches, was long and tedious. At one time the vessel was caught in the ice and threatened with destruction. The Master having lost his head, Captain Steele took command and saved the ship, and received an address of gratitude from the passengers.

After his arrival at York, Captain Steele proceeded to Medonte township, in Simcoe county, and settled on his 1,000 acre wooded estate—one of the grants of land allotted at that time to British officers, sailors, and soldiers in Upper Canada. Father and son set to work immediately to prepare a home for the arrival of the rest of the family the following year.

Let us get a glimpse of him. He was a handsome well proportioned man, 5 ft. 10 in. height, weighing 180 pounds in his prime. His eyes were keen blue, and his clean-shaven face was bronzed by the winds and suns of many seasons. In disposition he was generous and kind, but at times he could show fiery temper. He was a man of strong character and sterling qualities.

The task of building a house was a slow and arduous one. The trees had to be felled, the logs hewn, and the shingles made by hand. The plan of the Steele house was unique. There was a centre part 30 feet square,



Purbrook, the pioneer home (built in 1833) of Capt. Elmes Steele, R.N., in Medonte. (From a water colour by Mrs. Gilmour.)

with a wing at each end 25 feet long. On the south side of each wing ran a wide verandah. The centre part opened on to each verandah by French windows, thus making a covered stretch of 80 feet which the Captain was pleased to call his quarter-deck. The walls of the house were built of hand-hewn cedar logs, dove-tailed at the corners. The ceilings were flattened logs. Many of the inside walls were beautifully panelled. The floors were of wide pine boards. Heat was supplied by four huge fireplaces. Two large French windows facing the south flooded the centre part of the house with sunlight. Fine old pine and cedar trees at the rear and a rippling stream at the front made a lovely setting for the home which the captain named Purbrook after the English birthplace of his wife.

Mrs. Steele, before her marriage, was Elizabeth Seeley Coucher, and it is interesting to note that the Coucher family once owned what is now No. 10 Downing Street. In July, 1833, she and four children arrived at Purbrook, after a trip which had begun on April 27. They had come by sailing vessel to New York then (to quote Miss Steele's diary) by a "train of steam carriages on a track," next by canal boat to Utica, then by stage to Rochester, and finally across Lake Ontario by boat to York, where they were met by Captain Steele. The journey from York was by stage coach and wagon to Holland Landing, then by sloop across Lake Simcoe. They passed through the Narrows, and landed about seven o'clock in the evening at a little Indian Village (now Orillia), just as the setting sun touched with gold the dark green of the pines on the shore—this beautiful picture giving their first impression of Simcoe county.

After several days they proceeded by wagon drawn by their own horses to Purbrook, where John—the lad who had preceded them—gave them, as we can well imagine, a very warm welcome. John McKinley,

right-hand man, and the little Irish servant, introduced them to their new surroundings. The first meal was one never to be forgotten. There were milk, cream, and butter from their own cows, and mosquitoes, large, friendly and very businesslike.

The Steeles were now entering upon experiences vastly different from anything they had ever known. We can sense their loneliness and strangeness, transplanted from the cultured background of English city life to the depths of a Canadian forest a century ago. But to this family it was all a grand adventure, and in true pioneer spirit they set about building up a community life.

Some amusing stories of the time have been handed down. One is of Grannie Jamieson. Grannie lived near what is now Price's Corners, and one of her daily duties was to carry water from a "bonnie burn" in the woods. This day she filled her "joog," then, attracted by the wild flowers, she stepped from the beaten path into the dense woods. Soon she was lost. After walking and walking carrying her "joog" she came at last upon a stranger reading in the door of a tent by a stream. "Hoots, mon," she cried, quite startled, "I thocht ye were Elijah sitting in the door of his tent." The stranger was Captain Steele, who often occupied a tent while his house was building. He took the old lady in, kept her until the morning, and then sent her back in charge of one of his men.

One of Captain Steele's first actions was to donate 100 acres of land as an endowment for a parish church, and eight acres on which to erect the church and lay out a cemetery. Meanwhile he arranged for services to be held in his home by a travelling missionary. Rev. A. Elliott. Every week for years Mrs. Steele gathered the stray children of the settlers and taught them in Sunday School. The influence of this quiet, cultured Christian lady was felt for many miles.

Captain Steele took a keen interest in the affairs of the country. As magistrate he administered the district, aided by a number of military and naval officers. He recommended the building of the Trent Valley Canal in 1839, and was instrumental in restoring pensions to army and navy veterans who had commuted them to get a start in Canada. He advocated the construction of the road from Orillia to Toronto on the east side of Lake Simcoe and had the Narrows traffic bridge built. In the early 40's he was elected to Parliament. It was open voting then, lasting days, and open house was kept by the candidates. This election cost Captain Steele thousands of dollars but he was the winner, and did much for his riding during his single term. In connection with the election one of his admirers—Fitzgerald, an Irishman—composed a ditty, of which the following lines are remembered:

"His goodness and his kindness to every disthressed crathur
Is written in the Book of Life by our Celestial Maker."

The ending ran—

"We'll send him off to Parlyment all in his carriage rowlin."

In the meantime the young members of the family were growing up and finding their places in the world. The two older daughters, Millicent and Ellen married and settled in Toronto, becoming Mrs. James Henderson and Mrs. Alexander Murray respectively.

The son John became an excellent sportsman, runner, and rider, and a wonderful shot. He used a heavy octagon-barrelled rifle with a weighty ramrod, and with this could take the heads off two partridges with one shot. In those days even women and girls were expert with the rifle and could find their way easily through the forest. John married and settled in Oro township. For eighteen years he was reeve of that township, and in 1875 became warden of Simcoe county.

In 1846 Mrs. Steele died. She was buried in the little cemetery on the hill which her husband had donated years before to the parish.

Some time later Captain Steele married again, his second wife being Anne, daughter of Neil MacIan Macdonald, of Islay, Scotland. By her he had six children, four sons and two daughters, all born at Purbrook. In 1859, when the eldest son of his second family was only eight the mother died.

This eight year boy was Samuel Benfield Steele, who was very worthily to uphold the military traditions of his family. "S.B." as he was familiarly called in his home district, was commissioned ensign in the 35th Simcoe Foresters at the age of fifteen, climbed the military ladder rung by rung, and gave valuable and brilliant service in the Canadian West, in South Africa, and finally at Shorncliffe, England,during the Great War. He became Major-General Sir Sam Steele in 1914. "Forty Years in Canada," written by him and published in 1914, gives a vivid account of his military career. He had planned to buy back the

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To-day that cemetery is one of the best-kept rural cemeteries in the Province. The old log church has been replaced by a modern brick building on the same site, overlooking the waters of Georgian Bay.

The Steele estate has become the prosperous rural community of Fair Valley, Medonte. Unfortunately all that remains of the lovely old Purbrook home is a crumbling pile of cedar logs. But the memory of the Steele family will always be revered in that community. It can be truly said that of that family, as of many pioneer families throughout our Dominion: "They builded better than they knew."

ADDENDUM

Paragraph which should have been inserted immediately after the one referring to career of Col. Harwood Steele.

Mrs. Dudley lives in South Africa. She has three sons, Guildford, who saw active service with the South African forces in the Second World War and is a government engineer in Southern Rhodesia; Michael, who is studying medicine at Cape Town, and Charles, who contemplates a military career. If he carries out his plan, he will be following in ancestral footsteps on both sides, as his father, Lieut. Col. Stewart Dudley, M.C., had a regular commission in British Cavalry during the First World War and afterwards in the Indian Cavalry, while Major Edward Dudley, his grandfather on that side, was a regular officer of the British Army and in the South African Constabulary under Sir Sam Steele. Lieut. Col. Dudley is now an engineer in diamond mining in South Africa.

right-hand man, and the little Irish servant, introduced them to their new surroundings. The first meal was one never to be forgotten. There were milk, cream, and butter from their own cows, and mosquitoes, large, friendly and very businesslike.

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When Sam Steele was a boy, the family moved into Orillia, and he and his brother Richard got the major part of their education, aside from what they learned from their father, in the school of Edmund Slee, one of the village's early teachers.

In 1890 Sir Sam Steele had married Marie Elizabeth, daughter of Robert William de Lotbiniere-Harwood, M.P. There were three children in this family—two daughters, the late M. C. Flora Macdonald—to whom I am greatly indebted for much information contained in this paper—Gertrude, later the wife of Stewart Dudley, M.C.—and one son, Harwood Elmes.

Harwood Elmes Steele continued the brilliant family record. He served with the Canadian and British services in both world wars, being awarded the M.C. and twice mentioned in despatches, ultimately becoming Lieut-Colonel. He has written many books, among them "The Canadians in France, 1915-18" and "Policing the Arctic."

It would be remiss not to mention that two of Sir Sam's brothers, Godfrey MacNeil and Richard Elmes, joined the North-West Mounted Police with him on the formation of that Force in 1873. As the Force had a strength of only 150 until authority to double this was granted in 1874, 2 per cent. of the Originals were Steele brothers. This is thought to be a record.

Godfrey has a daughter, Mrs. Nicolls, living with her children in British Columbia, while Richard's three children, Sam, Elsie (Mrs. H. D. Duncan) and Ada (Mrs. Arthur Hodgins) and their children live in Alberta.

Captain Elmes Steele died August 6, 1865, aged 84 years, and was laid to rest in the family plot in the little cemetery he gave to the parish. To-day that cemetery is one of the best-kept rural cemeteries in the Province. The old log church has been replaced by a modern brick building on the same site, overlooking the waters of Georgian Bay.

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Outline of Career of Major-General Sir Samuel Benfield Steele

K.C.M.G., C.B., M.V.O.

Born Purbrook, near Orillia, Ontario, 5th January 1851. 4th son of Captain Elmes Steele, Royal Navy, of Coleford, Glocestershire, by his second wife, Anne, daughter of Neil MacIan Macdonald, of Islay, Scotland.

Joined Simcoe Foresters (Canadian Militia), 1866. Served in repulse of Fenian Raids (medal with clasp).

Commissioned Ensign that year, qualifying for Field Officer, with 100 per cent. marks in drill and discipline.

Raised and trained the Clarksburg Company, 31st Regiment (C.M.).

Served Red River Expedition of 1870, as Corporal, Ontario Rifles (medal with clasp).

Enlisted "A" Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery, on its formation, 1871. Instructor in gunnery.

Enlisted (with brothers Richard and Godfrey) North-West Mounted Police, on formation August, 1873. Immediately appointed Sergeant-Major "A" Division. Took part in "March of 1874", when "A" Division proceeded to the Rocky Mountains and back to Fort Edmonton.

Chief Constable (i.e. Regimental Sergeant-Major), 1875

Stationed Fort MacLeod, 1876-78. Present at Indian Treaty negotiations at Forts Carlton and Pitt; also for Treaty No. 7, and unsuccessful negotiations to persuade Sitting Bull and the Sioux to return to the United States after the Custer Massacre.

Inspector 1878.

Commanded at Fort Qu'Appelle 1880-1882 and commanded Mounted Police on line of construction of Canadian Pacific Railway, 1882-1883 and 1884-1885.

Commanded at Calgary 1883-1884.

Commanded Cavalry (N.W.M.P. and Steele's Scouts), Alberta Field Force, North-West Rebellion of 1885, with rank of Major. Present at Frenchman's Butte and led pursuit of Big Bear and Wood Crees. Highly commended by Commander Alberta Field Force (recommended for C.M.G., mentioned in despatches, medal with clasp).

Served Battleford and Fort MacLeod 1885-1886.

Commanded N.W.M.P. expedition into Kootenay, B.C., establishing Fort Steele and settling Indian troubles there, 1887 (thanked in General Orders).

Commanded MacLeod District, 1888-1898.

Married 15th January, 1890, Marie E. de Lotbiniere - Harwood, daughter of R. W. de Lotbiniere-Harwood, M.P., Seigneur of Vaudreuil, P.Q. (Three children: The late Mary Charlotte Flora Macdonald; Gertrude Alexandra Elizabeth—Mrs. Stewart Dudley; Harwood Robert Elmes, Lt. Col., M.C.

Commanded N.W.M.P. posts on White and Chilcoot Passes, Yukon Territory; magistrate and in charge of customs, February-July, 1898. 7th July, 1898, was promoted Lieut.-Colonel, appointed Member of Council forYukon Territory and commander of all N.W.M.P. in Yukon and British Columbia. Served in this capacity till September, 1899. The Gold Rush proper occurred at this time (1898-1899). (Thanked by Governor-General-in-Council).

Raised and commanded Lord Strathcona's Horse, South African War, 1899-1901. (Twice mentioned in despatches, promoted Brevet Colonel, created C.B. and M.V.O.; medal with clasp).
Resigned from N.W.M.P. 1st March, 1903.

Commanded "B" (Transvaal) Division, South African Constabulary, 1901-1906 (mentioned in despatches; medal with clasps).
Suppressed Chinese outrages on the Rand, 1906. (Thanked by South African Government).

Colonel, Canadian Permanent Force, in command of Military District No. 13 (H.Q. Calgary), 1907-1909 and M.D. No. 10 (H.Q. Wnnipeg), 1909-1914. Developed and greatly increased Canadian Militia of Prairie Provinces, thereby vitally facilitating mobilization for First World War.
Major-General, and Inspector-General of Western Canada, 1914.

Published autobiography, "Forty Years In Canada," 1914.

Organized, commanded and trained 2nd Canadian Division May-August, 1915, for service in France.
Commanded Shorncliffe Military District, August 1915-July 1918, which for most of this period contained most of the Canadian troops in the United Kingdom, as well as many Imperial troops.
Was Chairman Canadian Militia Council in Great Britain for approximately one year, 1915-1916, performing duties which, combined with his command at Shorncliffe, were virtually equivalent to those of Canadian Commander-in-Chief in the United Kingdom.
Visited forward area of Western Front several times and was under fire.

Created K.C.M.G., January, 1918, on recommendation of United Kingdom and Canadian authorities, in recognition of his services to the Commonwealth as well as to Canada. Several times mentioned in despatches; Allied and British General Service Medals.
Retired July 1918.
Died at Putney, England, 30th January, 1919. Buried in Winnipeg.

In the period 1907-1914, was first Boy Scout Commissioner for Manitoba, one of the principal administrators of the Strathcona Trust and instrumental in arranging the settlement of many thousands of British ex-Service men in Canada.
He was an A.F. and A.M. and one time President of the Canadian Club, Winnipeg.

Some Tributes to Sir Sam Steele

"Steele of the Royal Mounted" was used as a symbol of Canada by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in its official programme welcoming Newfoundland into Confederation.

James Oliver Curwood, author of the best-seller, "Steele of the Royal Mounted", acknowledged that, while the title-character was not based on Sir Sam Steele, he had used the name because it was everywhere regarded as the embodiment of the Force.

Major-General Draper, Chief of the Toronto City Police, referred to him as "the greatest police officer Canada ever produced."

John Garvin, Editor of the London "Observer," generally regarded as the doyen of his craft in Britain, described him as "that monumental man, as strong and selfless as the Rocky Mountains."

R. G. MacBeth, author of "Policing the Plains," wrote, in a biographical aricle, that he exemplified the truth of the Biblical "Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before Kings." The reference was not only to Sam Steele's character but to the fact that, starting as a private, with no influence (he had been left an orphan at the age of 14) he had risen to the highest military rank then possible in Canada (Major-General—substantive rank) and had been knighted by King George V.

Lord Shaughnessy, Chairman and President of the Canadian Pacific Railway, stated that the Company owed so much to Sir Sam Steele through his efficient policing of the line of construction of that nation-building institution under enormous difficulties that he (Lord Shaughnessy) regarded him as "one of our officers."

In recognition of these services and of all he had done for Canada and the Commonwealth, the Company arranged, when Sir Sam Steele died in London, England, on January 30th, 1919, to bring his body thence to Winnipeg for burial. Full military honours were accorded by the Canadian Government in London and at Quebec and Montreal, as well as at Winnipeg, a tribute having no counterpart except in the cases of a Prime Minister (Sir John Thompson) and ex-Prime Minister (Sir George Cartier).

John Dafoe, Editor of the Winnipeg "Free Press," wrote that during the Yukon Gold Rush, when the Mounted Police Steele commanded there won world-wide renown, "his great personal example enthused the whole Force with a sense of honour and esprit de corps that was greater than all temptation."

Henry Woodside, Editor of the Yukon Sun during The Rush, called Steele "The Lion of the Yukon" and stated that when he gave up command there "many thousands gathered at the wharf in Dawson to give him such an ovation and send-off as no other man has ever received from the Klondike gold-seekers."

The British Royal Commission to enquire into the conduct of the War in South Africa stated that "there was no better commander than the rough-riding Colonel from Canada."

Lord Baden-Powell told a capacity audience of the Winnipeg Canadian Club in 1910 that he had induced Col. Sam Steele to join the

South African Constabulary when he formed it to restore and maintain law and order in that country, following the 1899-1902 war, because he had to have an officer to guide them in organizing and running the S.A.C. on the model of the Royal North-West (now Royal Canadian) Mounted Police.

Mr. Keyter, who had commanded a Boer commando at the Siege of Ladysmith, publicly informed Col. Steele when he left South Africa that he had "worked with success to reconcile Briton and Boer, and if all would do the same there would not be an enemy of the King in the whole of South Africa." He added that Col. Steele "understood the Boers" and that "the South Africa Constabulary had been by far the greatest factor of all the government departments in conciliating the Boers and teaching them what good people Britons were."

On his return to Canada in 1907, Sir Frederick Borden, then Minister of Militia, informed Col. Steele that in view of the menace of a war with Germany, he was appointing him to command Military District No. 13 (Alberta) as a first step towards building up Canada's volunteer military forces in the West so that they would be ready, in the event of such a war becoming reality.

As the outcome of this policy, Steele, having started the required organization in the Alberta district, was transferred to Military District No. 10 (Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the largest district in Canada) in 1909 to complete the work. His services in this task were ultimately recognized by his being appointed, in 1914, to be Inspector-General of Western Canada, with the substantive rank of Major-General.

During his period of command, the Western Provinces increased the number of cavalry or mounted rifle units in their boundaries from 1 to 17 and the number of infantry battalions from 2 to 21, with corresponding increases in other arms and services.

Due largely to this effort, these Provinces, though containing only 25 per cent of Canada's population, of whom 450,000 were foreign-born and 200,000 could not speak English, raised 34 per cent of Canada's total enlistments for the First World War and provided 43 per cent of the infantry in the magnificent Canadian Corps.

In 1916, Lord Kitchener, then Secretary of State for War in the United Kingdom, asked for Major-General Sir Sam Steele to command the Shorncliffe District, including all Canadians in England, because he must (as he stated) have an officer trusted by, and capable of handling, British and Canadians alike and favoured by both governments and military authorities concerned.

Col. Wilfrid Bovey, of Quebec Legislative Council, who served in the Canadian Training Division at Shorncliffe, recently wrote in "The Legionary", "the Division had its own G.O.C. but as it was in a British Army area, it had a senior and supervisory G.O.C., who was that magnificient old veteran of the war in South Africa and the Royal North-West Mounted Police, Sir Sam Steele. Glad we were to be of his uncompromising support."

The following quotations from published writings of George Hope Johnston (magistrate who assisted Sir Sam Steele in policing the Canadian Pacific Railway), Henry Woodside, Roger Pocock (author of many pioneer Mounted Police books, who served under Sir Sam), the Rev. Christopher Reed (Orderly Room Clerk to Sir Sam in the Yukon),

R. G. MacBeth and an anonymous Force member contributing to "Scarlet and Gold", give an idea of the high esteem in which Sir Sam Steele was held in his generation:—

"He had all the requisites of a pioneer chief—a commanding presence, absolute fearlessness and a wonderful control over all sorts and conditions of men." "An officer of magnificent physique, in his tall, powerful figure, deep-chested proportions and massive shoulders, he suggested prodigious strength." "Erect as a pine tree and limber as a cat, he would have been remarked in any company." "A rigid disciplinarian but lovable and fearless commander, whom men would have followed anywhere", "A born soldier . . . a record-breaking horseman . . . an incomparable leader, he never asked a man to go where he would not lead him." "He was feared and respected by men who as a usual thing fear neither God nor man. When an occasion arose for rapid decision, he never waited a moment; and when he struck, he struck hard!"

Other outstanding characteristics were his sense of humour, modesty, kindness and loyalty. His sense of humour was one of action as well as word. In fact, the incidents in which he displayed great courage, strength and tact and subdued dangerous Indians and bad men single-handed were countless, but have for the most part been lost because they were never put on record.

His great strength and physical fitness became almost proverbial. And this he maintained till the end.

His powers of conciliation were exercised frequently to important ends. A typical case was his promoting, with one or two others, the forming of the now famous 22nd French-Canadian Regiment, against prejudiced opposition.

Nowhere did his loyalty shine more brightly than in his devotion to the Mounted Police, which continued to the end of his life. One of his last acts was to write a strongly worded letter appealing for an increase in the meagre pensions of old-time members of the Force.

His record of service is unique in that it covers 52 years of continuous service in police and military forces of Canada and South Africa, including cavalry, artillery and infantry, and involving active and distinguished service in the Fenian Raids, the Red River Expedition, the North-West Rebellion of 1885, the South African War and the Great War, in all ranks from private to Major-General.

The town of Fort Steele, B.C., at which he built an important Mounted Police post in 1886, commemorates him, as does the cairn and tablet erected there by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. The General Steele School, Fort Garry, near Winnipeg, and the Sir Sam Steele School, in Winnipeg itself, also are monuments to his memory. Mount Steele, in the Yukon (16,644 feet high, one of the highest in Canada), is an apt reminder of his services during the Great Gold Rush.

Two of his brothers, Godfrey MacNeil and Richard Elmes also were Originals of the Force, enlisting with him in the North-West Mounted Police on its formation. Their decendants live in British Columbia and Alberta respectively.

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A Medonte pioneer and his famous son

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